



NEWS RELEASE

EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT COUNCIL ON ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY

Eisenhower Executive Office Building, Room 360, Washington, DC 20503

President George W. Bush

James L. Connaughton, Chairman

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Contact: Horst Greczmiel
(202) 456-6224

TASK FORCE REQUESTS COMMENTS ON NEPA REFORM

The White House Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) has established a task force to review the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and examine opportunities to modernize NEPA analyses and documentation and improve the coordination of NEPA processes between all levels of government and the public. The task force has issued a Federal Register notice opening a 45-day public comment period, seeking ideas and examples of opportunities to improve and modernize the federal environmental analysis process, and comments on ways to improve NEPA implementation.

CEQ Chairman James L. Connaughton said, "The NEPA Task Force will help the Administration move federal environmental analysis and NEPA documentation into the 21st century. Our goal is to integrate NEPA practices with newer concepts of management, such as environmental management systems and advancing information management technologies."

The NEPA Task Force will evaluate NEPA-related issues that have risen to the forefront of discussion among NEPA practitioners. The task force will review opportunities to improve NEPA processes and barriers to those improvements. The task force will publish case studies and make recommendations on ways to improve and modernize NEPA implementation by updating environmental analysis practices.

The task force specifically requests public comments on five key areas where there are opportunities to improve the NEPA environmental analysis process: (1) technology and information management; (2) federal and intergovernmental collaboration; (3) programmatic analyses and subsequent tiered documents; (4) adaptive management and monitoring; and (5) how agencies promulgate categorical exclusions.

The task force is comprised of federal employees with decades of experience working with NEPA, GIS systems, and web-based applications. It includes representatives from the Environmental Protection Agency, the U.S. Forest Service, the Bureau of Land Management, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, the Army Corps of Engineers, the U.S. Geological Survey, the Federal Aviation Administration, and the Department of Energy.

All public comments submitted to the task force, as well as task force case studies and recommendations, will be posted on the CEQ web site at www.whitehouse.gov/ceq.

The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969 was signed into law by President Richard Nixon on January 1, 1970. NEPA calls upon federal agencies to study the environmental effects of their actions through an interdisciplinary environmental planning process that integrates environmental and economic issues. In cases where the environmental effects may be significant, the NEPA process informs and seeks input from the public, tribes, state and local agencies, as well as other federal agencies.

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